

Cardenas, Still Enigmatic, Backs Mexico City Parley

By Bert Quint

Special to the Herald Tribune

MEXICO CITY, Mar. 11.—Master of a nation, beloved by millions, and understood by few. That, in an oversimplified way, is the story of Lazaro Cardenas, perhaps the most powerful man to come onto the Latin American scene in the twentieth century. He was born a peasant, became a President, and then helped rule his country from behind the scenes for more than twenty years.

Gen. Cardenas has been called a Socialist, a Communist, a liberal and a democrat, yet he obeys the mandates of no party, not even that which he helped found a generation ago and which still governs Mexico.

For the first time since 1940, when Gen. Cardenas' six-year term as President of Mexico ended, the world through the eyes of its news correspondents here—recently had the opportunity to look closely at this man who has become an enigma and a legend in his lifetime.

World Peace Council

While Gen. Cardenas has traveled widely, especially in the Communist countries, after leaving public office, this was his first conference with the foreign press in Mexico since he returned to private life.

And he was forced to give this conference in order to get publicity for the cause he has recently espoused, that of the Redtinged World Peace Council, whose Latin American branch met this week in Mexico City. The Mexican government embarrassed by the convention, had tried to keep it quiet, and Mexican newspapers and magazines had given it virtually no publicity.

To get around this news blackout in his own country—a conspiracy of the Mexican press and foreign forces, he called it—Gen. Cardenas invited correspondents from other nations to question him.

Some twenty newsmen from the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union and other countries, many of whom long had tried vainly to arrange interviews with the general, accepted the invitation, curious to learn what kind of a man Lazaro Cardenas really is. After more than an hour of questions and answers, ranging from what Gen. Cardenas believes is the threat of armed aggression facing Fidel Castro's Cuba, to the United Nations which he says has failed to live up to its stated principles, they still weren't sure.

Questions Unasked

There were many questions they would have asked had they thought they would be answered, questions such as whether the general still is the kingmaker of Mexican politics, as many insist; whether he really is a Communist, as some say and others deny; and why, if he is not a Communist, he is an officer of the World Peace Council.

There is reason for puzzlement about Gen. Cardenas. He has been an unconventional figure since the years when he fought in Mexico's revolution, and the period following it when he made his mark in politics, first as Governor of Michoacan State and in 1924-40 as President.

When Lazaro Cardenas assumed the highest office in the republic it was as a puppet for Plutarco Elias Calles, who himself had been President and who intended to control the government through the men he placed in that office. But unlike other candidates, Gen. Cardenas had gone out into the country, met the people and gained their support. Unlike other puppet Presidents, he had put his own machine into operation, strengthening his position with all sectors to such a point that after two years he was able to place Calles on a plane bound for the United States to exile.

Land to Peasants

During the next four years, Cardenas gave more land to the peasants of Mexico than had been distributed since the revolution "for land and freedom" had begun in 1910.

But what gained him international attention was his expropriation of foreign oil holdings. This came on March 18, 1938, after a bitter and costly strike of refinery and field workers. The Supreme Court had ruled in favor of the workers, and the companies had failed to comply with the court's ruling. When foreigners refused to obey Mexican law, Gen. Cardenas acted, thus setting the stage for other nationalizations, including that of the foreign-owned electric power industry last year.

Throughout the years, he has been considered by many as a Communist. And there have been indications that he is, despite the fact that he apparently does not hold a card. He has been awarded the Stalin Peace Prize, has visited the Communist countries and been welcomed by them as a hero, has advocated measures that are radical even for the addition-

ally moderate Socialist Mexican government, and organized the conference this week whose chief aims included the "unification

of Latin American countries and elements against the threat of invasion of Cuba by foreign forces." i. e., the United States.

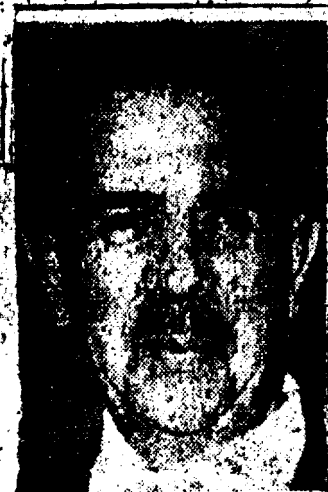
Haven to Trotsky

Others point to the fact that it was Gen. Cardenas who offered a haven for Leon Trotsky in the 1930s after Trotsky had broken with Stalin. They say that he seeks only the liberty and betterment of the poor individual, and that he does not care which groups he uses forces with in order to achieve what he believes is right.

In his mid-sixties now, Gen. Cardenas appears to have changed little over the past twenty years. His thick black mustache is grayer and his hard military figure is less trim. But the correspondents who interviewed him noted, there was still an idealistic determination in the quiet way he spoke, a frankness in his dark eyes as he answered questions.

His words seemed in many cases to echo the party line, especially when he talked of how "the pressure of imperialism is impeding the free expression of thought in Mexico and other Latin American countries" and of "economic colonialism." But for many of those present, it was hard to imagine this man echoing anything but his own thoughts.

And as opposed to their own way of thinking as some of these thoughts were to the correspondents from Western nations, it was easy for them to see why Lazaro Cardenas has played and continues to play such an important part in the politics of his country.



Associated Press
Gen. Lazaro Cardenas

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NY Times

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Cuba



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The Mexican Conference

The sensationally heralded "Latin-American Conference for National Sovereignty, Economic Emancipation and Peace" has come and gone in Mexico City without making a sensation. It can be considered a failure.

The advance notices threatened a meeting that would rally Latin-American opinion to *Fidelismo* and against the United States. As it turned out, there was more *comunismo* than *Fidelismo*. The final resolutions were mainly in the same old Communist line—against "American economic imperialism" and the Monroe Doctrine, for an independent Puerto Rico and a free Panama Canal Zone. There was a section and many speeches in favor of the Cuban revolution, but the emphasis was elsewhere.

The conference, in short, was another proof that *Fidelismo* is being weakened in the hemisphere by its alliance with communism. No important Latin-American liberals took part in the meeting with the exception of former President Lázaro Cárdenas, who again puzzled and

disappointed his friends and admirers by lending his impressive name and prestige to a conference that did not represent things for which he has stood. His own address to the meeting was moderate and was not anti-Yankee.

Despite widespread beliefs in the United States, Lázaro Cárdenas is not anti-American and he certainly never was, and is not, a Communist. His position in history is that of the Mexican patriot and champion of the people, who completed the program of the Mexican Revolution in his Presidential term from 1934 to 1940. He has spent his life in behalf of the Mexican peasants, and he belongs in the line of the humanistic, liberal traditions of Latin America.

Lázaro Cárdenas was a great revolutionary, but like Fidel Castro he does not seem to have realized that communism is an alien and essentially counter-revolutionary force. Latin-American ideals and aspirations lose attraction when presented in Communist guise, and the "Peace" meeting that just ended in Mexico City is one more proof of that.

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NIGHT LEAD SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE (330)

MIAMI, FLA., JUNE 27 (AP)-IN AN AREA OF THE WILD FLORIDA EVERGLADES ACCESSIBLE ONLY BY BOAT, AN ADVENTUROUS BAND OF MEN FROM THREE CONTINENTS IS TRAINING FOR MILITARY ADVENTURE IN CUBA.

NEWS OF THE SOLDIER OF FORTUNE GROUP WAS PUBLISHED BY MIAMI NEWS-PAPERS AFTER SEN. GEORGE SMITHERS, D.FLA., DISCLOSED ITS EXISTENCE ON A NATIONWIDE RADIO NETWORK.

UNTIL THEN, THE MIAMI HERALD SAID IT FELT THE STORY WAS WITHIN A SENSITIVE AREA OF NATIONAL POLICY.

THE BAND, CALLED INTERNATIONAL PENETRATION FORCE (INTERPEN), IS HEADED BY A SIX-FOOT, SEVEN-INCH MAN CALLED JERRY PATRICK WHOSE LONG WAVY HAIR, NEATLY-TRIMMED BEARD AND AUSTRALIAN BUSH HAT GIVE HIM AN ERROL FLYNN APPEARANCE.

HIS MEN--HE SAYS HE CAN MUSTER 100 FROM NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICAN AND EUROPE--WEAR U.S. MARINE FATIGUE UNIFORMS AND PARATROOP BOOTS PURCHASED AT ARMY SURPLUS STORES.

THEY ALSO RENT A LIGHT PLANE WHICH IS USED TO PRACTICE PARACHUTE JUMPING AT AN ABANDONED SOUTH FLORIDA AIRFIELD.

THE HERALD, IN A COPYRIGHTED STORY, SAID INTERPEN IS A PART OF THE INTERNATIONAL ANTI-COMMUNIST BRIGADE, WHICH BELONGS TO THE ANTI-CASTRO REVOLUTIONARY JUNTA OF NATIONAL LIBERATION.

THE BAND APPEARS TO BE WELL DISCIPLINED. PATRICK EXPLAINED THAT "WE WEED OUT ALL THE CRACKPOTS AND BUMS."

RECRUITS ARE FIRST HOUSED IN A CLUSTER OF BOARDING HOUSES IN THE SOUTHWEST SECTION OF MIAMI, THEN SENT TO THE EVERGLADES. SOMETIMES THEY ARE FORCED TO LIVE OFF THE LAND.

"ONCE, WHEN WE WERE LOW ON GRUB, WE KILLED AN OWL AND MADE A STEW," ONE MEMBER SAID. "IT DIDN'T HAVE MUCH MEAT. WE ALSO EAT SWAMP CABBAGE AND ALMOST ANYTHING ELSE WE CAN FIND."

PATRICK SAYS OTHER MEMBERS OF THE FORCE ARE AT BASES IN CALIFORNIA AND "UP NORTH."

ASKED WHY THEY JOINED, MEMBERS OF THE UNIT FIRST SAID, "TO FIGHT COMMUNISM." LATER, THEY CONCEDED THEY WERE "LOOKING FOR ADVENTURE." ONE ADDED, "I'D RATHER BE SHOT TO DEATH THAN BORED TO DEATH."

PATRICK SAYS THE FORCE IS TRAINING FOR COMMANDO-TYPE RAIDS. THAT TYPE OF WARFARE, HE SAYS, IS THE ONLY KIND THAT CAN TOPPLE CASTRO.

"YOU HAVE TO HIT THE SMALL TOWNS ALONG THE BEACHES TO DRAW OUT THE MILITIA FROM THE HILLS," HE SAID. "AFTER THERE IS BREATHING SPACE IN THE HILLS, YOU PARACHUTE IN THE FOLLOW GUERRILLA TACTICS."

ANOTHER ANTI-CASTRO BAND OF AMERICANS IN MIAMI IS LED BY VIC HANNARD, A FORMER CASTRO AGENT WHO DEFECTED. HIS SMALLER GROUP IS CALLED FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF AMERICA (CAPS F.F.A.).

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